

IN THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A three dimensional thermoplastic welding rod comprising:
 - a first layer formed from material comprising pigmented particles, the pigmented particles comprising a majority by volume of the first layer; and
 - a second layer formed from material comprising transparent or translucent particles, the second layer having an exposed surface opposite the first layer, the portion of the second layer adjacent the exposed surface comprising substantially all transparent or translucent particles.
2. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the second layer has a greater thickness than the first layer.
3. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the pigmented particles are applied and consolidated to generate a design or pattern effect.
4. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the pigmented particles are selected from the group consisting of solid colored particles, jaspe particles, pearlized particles and combinations thereof.

5. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the first layer further comprises transparent particles.

6. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the pigmented particles are larger than the transparent or translucent particles.

7. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein the particles comprise a thermoplastic polymeric material.

8. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 1, wherein transparent particles are substantially colorless.

9. A method of forming a three dimensional thermoplastic welding rod comprising:

depositing a first layer comprising pigmented particles;
depositing a second layer of transparent or translucent particles onto the layer of pigmented particles; and
consolidating the first layer and second layer to form a welding rod.

10. The method of claim 9, further including depositing the first layer onto a substrate.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the substrate comprises a release paper.

12. The method of claim 9, wherein the pigmented particles comprise particles having at least two distinct colors.

13. The method of claim 9, wherein the pigmented particles are deposited in a pattern.

14. The method of claim 9, wherein some of the transparent or translucent particles are dispersed between the pigmented particles of the first layer adjacent the second layer.

15. The method of claim 9, wherein the second layer is deposited at a greater thickness than the first layer.

16. A method of forming a surface covering comprising:
providing at least two sheets; and
welding the two sheets together using a thermoplastic welding rod comprising a first layer formed from material comprising pigmented particles, the pigmented particles comprising a majority by volume of the first layer; and a second layer formed from material comprising transparent or translucent particles, the second layer having an exposed surface opposite the first layer, the portion of the second layer adjacent the exposed surface comprising substantially all transparent or translucent particles.

17. The method of claim 16, further including forming an excess of clear layer above the welded joint.

18. The method of claim 17, further including removing the excess clear layer above the welded joint.

19. A surface covering comprising:

at least two sheets joined together by a welded seam, wherein the seam comprises a first layer formed from material comprising pigmented particles, the pigmented particles comprising a majority by volume of the first layer; and a second layer formed from material comprising transparent or translucent particles, the second layer having an exposed surface opposite the first layer, the portion of the second layer adjacent the exposed surface comprising substantially all transparent or translucent particles.

20. The surface covering of claim 19, wherein the thickness of the first layer of pigmented particles is equal to or less than the thickness of a pigmented layer of the sheets.

21. A three dimensional thermoplastic welding rod comprising:

a first layer formed from a first material comprising a plurality of first particles,

and

a second layer formed from a second material comprising a plurality of second particles, the second layer having an exposed surface opposite the first layer, the transparency of the second layer being at least 30% greater than the transparency of the first layer.

22. The three dimensional welding rod of claim 21, wherein the average diameter of the particles forming the first layer are greater than the average diameter of the particles forming the second layer, some of the particles forming the second layer interpenetrating the particles forming the first layer at the interface between the first and second layers.

23. The welding rod of claim 21, wherein the second particles are substantially colorless.

24. The welding rod of claim 21, wherein the second material further comprises a minority by volume of opaque particles.

25. The welding rod of claim 21, wherein the first layer further comprises a minority by volume of the second particles and the second layer further comprises a minority by volume of the first particles.

26. A surface covering comprising:

at least two sheets joined together by a welded seam, wherein the seam comprises a first layer formed from a first material comprising a plurality of first particles, and a second layer formed from a second material comprising a plurality of second particles, the second layer having an exposed surface opposite the first layer, the transparency of the second layer being at least 30% greater than the transparency of the first layer.

27. The surface covering of claim 26, wherein the average diameter of the particles forming the first layer are greater than the average diameter of the particles forming the second layer, some of the particles forming the second layer interpenetrating the particles forming the first layer at the interface between the first and second layers.

28. The surface covering of claim 26, wherein the second particles are substantially colorless.

29. The surface covering of claim 26, wherein the second material further comprises a minority by volume of opaque particles.

30. The surface covering of claim 26, wherein the first layer further comprises a minority by volume of the second particles and the second layer further comprises a minority by volume of the first particles.